

The Muse.

LAYING DOWN THE KINGDOM.

BY J. H. GUNTON.

So Thomas is going to get married.
To be honest, a little, a young man.
He has said himself, and he never
desires or joked me in his life.

When William got married it gave me
No thought of regret or surprise;
For the boy seemed just made for a woman—
To live in the light of her eyes.

And when Clara was wed to the South—
Through Clara, my daughter, was dear—
And removed to the far Rappahannock,
I sat but a sigh and a tear.

But Thomas, my staff and my eldest,
Seemed never to care for the girls.
So proud, like the oak, to surrender
As last to soft eyes and soft curls!

Since John died—six years ago Christmas—
Our Thomas—his wife's the same—
With more than the strength of his father
Has stayed up the house and the name.

I never once thought he could marry,
So kindly, so firm, and so kind—
Ah! I fear his wife will be needed;
For my old eyes, indeed, must be blind.

He tells me I'm getting so aged,
I need more nurses, more fresh air;
So a daughter will bring me to lighten
My burden of labor and care.

Ah! he! It may think so; he brings me
A mirror, it may be, instead.
The couple must part to another,
And I to my grave, or my bed.

But, hold! it is well. O my Father!
Help me to subdue my proud heart.
Have I raised like a queen; but 'tis over;
And another right takes the part.

I yield her my empire for ever,
And, Thomas, I'll love all that's mine.
Thy chosen shall have all her honors,
As I've always had all of mine.

Come hither, my little man, Tommy,
Come hither, my rosy, my father;
You are Grandfather's darlings and treasures—
Her pearls hang about her again.

Not Papa, Uncle Will, nor Aunt Clara—
So grand and so sweet when she comes—
Ever gave me one-half of the pleasure
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They have kisses and cheer in the morning;
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"The current jelly must be made to-morrow," said old Mrs. Clinton, lifting her eyes from the paper she was reading.

"Oh! not in this dreadful weather surely," remonstrated Sophy. "Do let us wait for a cooler day."

"Nonsense!" said old Mrs. Clinton. "The currants are full ripe now, and if they once get over-ripe your jelly will never come. You might boil it till doomsday. Besides, it is nearly a week since we've had rain, and it is likely to come upon us at any hour, and if the currants once get wet it takes forever to dry them. The jelly must be made to-morrow."

Sophy heaved a sigh of weariness, but did not venture further to oppose her mother-in-law.

The next morning rose beautiful and bright; but alas! hotter than ever. (There are times, good reader, when the most delicate refinement must give way, and people must use language that expresses their meaning. To call such weather as we are writing of simply warm would be a ludicrous affectation.) Immediately after breakfast Sophy put on her garden hat, and took a basket on her arm.

"Now, Bridget," she said to the stout serving-woman who had finished clearing away, and was folding the table-cloth, "if we pick steadily for an hour, I think we shall have enough. And if we keep in the shade of the plum trees, I hope we shall not find the heat intolerable."

"What is that you are saying?" asked old Mrs. Clinton. "Going to take Bridget away from her work to help you pick currants? I shall have nothing like that. Bridget has all her dishes to wash, and after that she must get the great kettle on over the back kitchen fire-places; for I want the flannel sheets and the blue worked coverlets all washed to-day; it's been put off too long already, and this will be a splendid drying day."

"But it will take me so long to pick all the currants by myself," said Sophy. "It's such disagreeable work, too, I hate it."

"When you've lived as long as I have," replied the old lady, "you'll find that people have to do things that are disagreeable; you must not expect always to have everything just so pleasant."

It is a fine idea that a person that has everything done to her hand, and never so much as washes out a pair of stockings for herself, can't go out of a morning and pick a few currants! I wonder how you would have done to be placed as I am to be! Five children and myself and my husband and a hired man to do for, and no one to lift a finger to help me; besides the milk of two cows to take charge of, and I didn't make as much of it as you would to see the tea-table!"

Sophy's cheeks burned with vexation, but she made no answer. Slowly, and in no amiable mood, she went out at the back door.

"Only say the word," said Bridget, "and I'll go with you. Never mind the old out in there; sure you're right to be mistress in your own house."

"You mustn't speak in that way, Bridget," replied Sophy. "It's very wrong of you. I'm sure I wish you could go out with me; but I would make more trouble than it's worth. We must try to have peace at any rate."

"Anything in the world for quietness," assented Bridget, and the young wife passed on.

It was rather pleasant under the plum tree after all; the currants grew very large and abundant, and she soon became absorbed in picking them. The little basket was half full when a voice from an upper window called out,

"Sophy! Sophy!"

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"I can't have you pick those currants!" she said; "they are the largest and nicest we have in the garden, and I always keep them for tea, and to eat out of hand when we want them. Go over on the other side where the small ones are; they are exactly as good for jelly!"

Sophy looked across to the designated side, where the sun was pouring down in full blaze.

"But it will be so hot there!" she expostulated. "It'll all be so hot there!"

"Sophy," said Mrs. Clinton, "I am astonished at you. I know you were a child, but I didn't think you were quite a baby. Just go right on now and get the currants, as I tell you. I'm not going to have those nice ones used for jelly and only miserable little things left for the table."

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